

ILLUSIONS

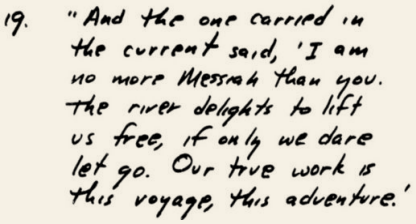
The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah

Richard Bach · a novel · 1977

After *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Bach kept flying an antique biplane over the Midwest, selling three-dollar rides, and kept wondering: *"what if a Siddhartha or a Jesus came into our time"* and landed in the same hayfield? This is that story. A barnstormer named Richard meets Donald Shimoda, a messiah who has quit the job, and spends one summer learning that *"we magnetize into our lives whatever we hold in our thought."*

Chapter 1 *hand-lettered by Bach*

The book opens with a 33-verse parable in Bach's handwriting. A Master *"born in the holy land of Indiana"*, a mechanic of automobiles, heals people until the crowds leave him no room to work. He tells them a parable: creatures cling to the bottom of a crystal river, and one lets go.


19. "And the one carried in the current said, 'I am no more Messiah than you. The river delights to lift us free, if only we dare let go. Our true work is this voyage, this adventure.'

Then he climbs a hill, is told *"Go thy way as other men, and be thou happy on the earth,"* comes down and says pleasantly to the crowd, *"I quit."*

The story *one summer, two biplanes*

1. July, a hayfield north of Ferris, Illinois. Richard lands his 1929 Fleet beside a spotless Travel Air 4000. Its pilot says: *"I've been waiting for you."*
2. Shimoda, once called *"the Mechanic Messiah"*, quit because the crowds wanted miracles, not his message.
3. They barnstorm together. Bugs on a windshield fly away; a man who hadn't walked in eleven years runs to the plane; clouds vanish; Shimoda swims through the ground.
4. He hands Richard the *Messiah's Handbook*. Richard practises on make-believe seekers until Shimoda says, *"You just graduated. How does it feel to be a Master?"*
5. After a radio show turns callers against him, Shimoda is shot in his cockpit and dies.
6. That autumn Richard dreams of him alive, wakes, and begins to write.

What Shimoda teaches

It's a movie
"anything that's got space and time is all movie and all illusion." We buy the ticket by believing in it, and we can change the plot.

Choose your hurt
"We choose, ourselves, to be hurt or not to be hurt, no matter what."

Play
"We are game-playing, fun-having creatures, we are the otters of the universe."

Imagination, not faith
"Humbug on faith. Takes zero faith. What it takes is imagination."

Responsibility
"Responsible is Able to Respond, able to answer for the way we choose to live."

Happiness
"If your happiness depends on what somebody else does, I guess you do have a problem."

Try it, the way they do *a novel, not a program: these are things the characters practise*

- **Vaporize a cloud.** Pick a small one and *"just relax and remove it from your thinking."* Don't strain at it.
- **The blue feather.** Start with *"Something small, at first." "Visualize it, every line and edge of it ... Just for a minute. Then let it go."* Richard's turned up that evening on a milk carton.
- **Read your days like dreams.** *"look at the things of your waking life and ask what they stand for."*
- **Ask a book.** *"hold some problem in your mind, then open any book handy and see what it tells you".*
- **Filter your day.** Ask *"is this what I really want to do,"* and do it only when the answer is yes.
- **Ask the simplest questions.** Where were you born? Where is your home? Where are you going? What are you doing? Then *"watch your answers change."*

"Within each of us lies the power of our consent to health and to sickness, to riches and to poverty, to freedom and to slavery. It is we who control these, and not another."

Chapter 1, verse 9

MESSIAH'S HANDBOOK

Reminders for the Advanced Soul · open it anywhere

"Learning is finding out what you already know.
Doing is demonstrating that you know it.
Teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you."

"There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands.
You seek problems because you need their gifts."

"Argue for your limitations, and sure enough, they're yours."

"You are never given a wish without also being given the power to make it true.
You may have to work for it, however."

"Your friends will know you better in the first minute you meet than your acquaintances will know you in a thousand years."

"You teach best what you most need to learn."

"The original sin is to limit the Is. Don't."

"What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly."

Barnstorming notes

Price	*"Three dollars cash, sir, for nine, ten minutes in the air."*
Planes	Richard: 1929 Fleet, Kinner engine. Shimoda: Travel Air 4000, gold and white, *"Don"* in gold leaf.
Route	Ferris, Illinois to Troy, Hammond (Wisconsin), Ryerson (Ohio), Hayward; south to Mississippi by autumn.
One day	Ferris: 49 flights, $147.
Last line	Of the Handbook, beside Shimoda's body: *"Everything in this book may be wrong."*

"In the path of our happiness shall we find the learning for which we have chosen this lifetime."